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C O N F I D E N T I A L SARAJEVO 000136

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DEPT FOR EUR (DICARLO), D (SMITH), P (BAME), EUR/SCE (HOH,
SAINZ, FOOKS), AND EUR/RPM (BROTZEN), NSC FOR BRAUN, USNIC
FOR WIGHTMAN, OSD FOR MARK JONES, USNATO FOR SHAFFER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/18/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [BK](#)

SUBJECT: GUIDANCE REQUEST - BOSNIA'S MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN
IRAQ CONTRIBUTION

REF: A. A) SARAJEVO 84

[B. B\) 06 SARAJEVO 2908](#)

[C. C\) 06 SARAJEVO 3159](#)

[D. D\) SARAJEVO 60](#)

Classified By: Ambassador Douglas McElhaney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1. \(U\)](#) This is an action request, please see paragraph 7.

SUMMARY

[2. \(C\)](#) Following our initial presentation of the President's Iraq strategy last week (Ref A), the Ambassador met with the all three members of Bosnia's Tri-Presidency to discuss the deployment in Iraq of Bosnia's Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) platoon. These exchanges reinforce previous assessments (Ref B) that the political climate in Bosnia is hardening against further Bosnian participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Earlier in the month, outgoing Bosnian Minister of Defense Radmanovic received a letter from MNFI Commander, General Casey, requesting deployment of a fifth rotation with the addition of a 12-15 member force protection unit. The Ministry of Defense (MoD) has expressed concern that the addition of security personnel would require parliamentary approval and both Presidency and MoD officials have warned this would be a hard sell. Post judges that parliamentary opposition to an expanded deployment is likely.

All three members of the Tri-Presidency told the Ambassador that they would approve a fifth EOD rotation without additional security personnel, although Haris Silajdzic's endorsement was more equivocal than the others. Presidency and MoD officials have interpreted the MFI letter as a military-to-military communication rather than a formal bilateral request and seek "clarification" of the operative USG request. Our recommendation is that we hold off on this request for now, lest we place the entire deployment in jeopardy. Post requests instructions detailing USG requirements for the next Bosnian deployment to OIF. End summary.

EXPANDED DEPLOYMENT REQUEST

13. (C) The Ministry of Defense (MoD) recently brought to our attention a letter from MNFI requesting that Bosnia supplement the next rotation of its Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) platoon, scheduled to deploy to Iraq in May, with a 12-15 member force protection unit. Senior uniformed leadership, including Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Sifet Podzic, have told us that the Bosnian Armed Forces could logistically meet this request. However, MoD civilian leadership has raised concerns that, given the nationalistic drift of Bosniak politics, (Ref B) political opposition to Bosnia's Iraq mission would be exacerbated by a request to deploy additional security personnel. They added that, in this context, a request for an expanded deployment could throw the new rotation, and possibly the current one, into doubt. Ministry officials also stated that the defense budget could not support the cost of additional deployed personnel. Ministry officials have also echoed Defense Minister Radovanovic's December assertion to the Ambassador that the EOD unit in Iraq is under used (Ref C). Both the minister and his key deputies have repeatedly suggested transitioning the EOD deployment from Iraq to Afghanistan.

SILAJDZIC WILL BE A PROBLEM

14. (C) Ambassador met separately with all three members of the Bosnian Tri-Presidency to urge their support for a new rotation and discuss the MNFI request for an augmented deployment. Bosnian Serb Presidency Chairman Nebojsa Radmanovic stated he was not opposed, in principle, to an augmented deployment. However, he added that an enhanced deployment would face political opposition in other parts of the government with Bosniak Presidency member Haris Silajdzic being the chief obstacle. Radmanovic did not undertake to

advocate for the enhanced deployment with other Presidency members. Bosnian-Croat President Zelko Komsic told the Ambassador that an augmented deployment was possible but only if was made clear that the additional forces would be responsible only for protecting Bosnian soldiers. Haris Silajdzic refused to state whether he would support sending additional security personnel, noting his initial opposition to the war in Iraq. Silajdzic said only that an expanded deployment could be the subject of future "exchanges." When pressed, Silajdzic conceded that he would support a continuation of the current EOD mission without the security personnel. (Comment. Silajdzic left little room for doubt that he would be a serious obstacle to the deployment of additional security personnel. End comment.)

PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION

15. (C) Parliamentary approval will be required if the composition of the Iraq mission is altered. As part of its 2004 decision conferring discretion over the EOD deployments to the Presidency, Parliament specified the size and composition of the unit. Under this authority, the Presidency has approved four successive EOD rotations and may continue to do so for a fifth if there are no changes in its composition. Parliament has made clear, however, that it must review any changes to military deployments to Iraq. A parliamentary review of an expanded deployment would likely lead to a lengthy and divisive debate with nationalist members of the Bosniak caucus questioning the merits of the deployments in general. Serb deputies radicalized by the Kosovo final status process could also engage in grandstanding by taking public shots at the Iraq mission. There could also be further complications, if, as expected, the MOD remains without a new minister until April or MayQ(Ref D).

COMMENT: TAKING ACCOUNT OF CLIMATE, LIMITATIONS

16. (C) Comment. Bosnia's continued deployments to MNFI is

one of post's highest priorities. Not only do Bosnian forces play a valuable role in coalition support activities, their engagement in such missions increases their inter-operability and ability to deploy in future operations. Continued engagement in coalition operations has also been instrumental in supporting the defense reform agenda, a cornerstone of the USG objective of building a sovereign, united Bosnia firmly anchored to the Euro-Atlantic community. However, there are substantial political and legal impediments to supplementing a new EOD rotation with a force protection unit. Given varying degrees of opposition within the Presidency, and hostility in Parliament. Our recommendation is that we not push immediately for the protection unit lest we place in danger the current Bosnian contingent. We as should revisit this issue in several months to determine whether the political climate is more propitious for making the proposal. End comment.

17. (C) Action request. Post requests instructions outlining USG requirements for the next Bosnian deployment to OIF. End action request.

MCELHANEY